

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY: Drawing Strength From Our Heritage

**G**lobal cooperation creates opportunities for promoting cultural diversity and facilitating communities' ability to express their cultural identity.

In Quebec City, leaders recognized the importance of the tangible and intangible heritage of our diverse cultures, and agreed to implement and promote activities that would enhance the appreciation, understanding, and protection of this heritage in the Americas. They specifically identified the urgent need to prevent illegal trafficking in cultural property, which undermines cultural identity and deprives us of our historical legacy.

Leaders also agreed to promote cooperation with non-governmental organizations to implement and support programs that, among other things, will conserve, restore, and research cultural heritage and property.

Seeking to create an environment that encourages understanding cultural and linguistic diversity in our countries, leaders agreed to enhance exchanges focused on diversity and issues of respect for other cultures. They also agreed to support cooperative media efforts such as film, television, and publishing projects that promote inter-cultural dialogue.



Mexicans celebrate the Day of the Dead in the Zocalo Square of Mexico City. (Imelda Medina, EPA)

Drawing strength from the many cultures that have contributed to the building of our nation, the United States promotes a wide range of educational and cultural exchanges, through the public and private sectors. Through the National Endowment for the Arts, the U.S. encourages and supports artistic creativity to preserve our diverse cultural heritage with grants supporting works of artistic excellence, advancing learning in the arts, and strengthening the arts in communities throughout the country.

### U.S. ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE HEMISPHERE'S AGENDA

- **Heritage Fellowships** are the country's highest honor in the folk and traditional arts. Four of 11 awards in 2003 related to traditional arts of the hemisphere.
- The U.S. Government worked with Arte Sem Fronteiras, a Brazil-based NGO, to identify U.S. participants and resources for three meetings that took place in the hemisphere in 2003 in preparation for the **2004 Global Cultural Forum** in Barcelona.
- The U.S. Government forged a new **U.S.-Mexico Cultural Connections Initiative** in partnership with Mexico's National Fund for Culture and the Arts, aimed at helping build an arts infrastructure between the two countries.
- The U.S. State Department administers the **Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation**, which provides grant support for the preservation of endangered cultural objects, sites, and forms of traditional expression in less-developed countries.
- The U.S. has entered into bilateral **cultural property protection agreements** with six countries in Central and South America, to increase cooperation against the pillage and illicit trafficking of both their pre-Columbian archaeological and Colonial ethnological heritage.